



INSIDE INDIA

March 24, 2009

Special TB Issue

USAID Commemorates World TB Day

About 1.7 million people around the world die annually from Tuberculosis (TB), which remains one of the three leading causes of death from infectious disease worldwide. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), two billion people – one third of the world's total population – are infected with the microbes that cause TB and one in every 10 of those people will become sick with active TB in his or her lifetime. It is a disease that hits the poorest and most vulnerable groups, especially women and children. People living with HIV are at a much greater risk for TB, which is the leading cause of death for AIDS patients. To call attention to the disease and to mobilize action to combat it, the World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes March 24th each year as World Tuberculosis Day



MDR-TB patient. Photo: Subhash Sharma from an exhibit sponsored by Eli Lilly and Company India ,Pvt. Ltd *

While much progress has been made in TB control, India, with one fifth of the world's TB cases, continues to bear the heaviest burden of any nation. TB claims the lives of 1,000 Indians daily and an estimated 1.8 million new cases develop in India annually, of which



A woman waits for her treatment at a DOTS center

800,000 are the contagious active form of the disease, which spreads through the air from one person to another through coughing and sneezing. TB-HIV co-infection and emerging strains of drug-resistant TB add to the complex public health challenge and staggering human toll. The World Health Organization (WHO) now estimates that over 110,000 cases of multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB) develop annually in India – more than any other country in the world. These drug resistant strains of TB are deadlier and more difficult to treat, taking up to two years of supervised medication.

(Continued on page 2)

**All of the photos in this issue of Inside India are the work of Mumbai based photographer Subhash Sharma and are reprinted courtesy of Eli Lilly and Company India, Pvt. Ltd.*

(Continued from page 1)

Additionally, with the Government of India (GOI) estimating that 100 million workdays are lost every year due to TB, resulting in \$300 million in direct losses and nearly \$3 billion in indirect losses, TB remains a serious impediment to the economic development of India.

The U.S. is on the frontlines of TB control around the world, with USAID supporting TB programs in India and 36 other countries. A decade ago only 2% of the population of India was covered by the national TB program. However, with USAID support, the Government of India initiated a rapid expansion of the Revised National TB Control Program (RNTCP), and by early 2006 the entire nation was covered with free diagnosis and treatment of TB. During the same period, the RNTCP also made significant strides in improving and maintaining the quality of their treatment and control efforts, as evidenced by the recent achievement of meeting both international goals in case detection and cure rates in 2008. These efforts have resulted in treatment for 8 million patients and over 1.4 million lives saved .



A woman taking her medication at a DOTS center

Recognizing the tremendous burden TB places on families and communities in India, USAID is committed to supporting GOI TB control efforts, planned, coordinated, and carried out with the GOI, other donors including the World Bank, the UK Department for International Development, the Global Fund for AIDS, TB, and Malaria, and technical partners including WHO and the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. USAID is working to: improve the quality of basic TB treatment or DOTS (Directly Observed Therapy, Short Course) services; upgrade laboratory infrastructure; support the development and introduction of new diagnostic technologies; and conduct drug resistance surveys and surveillance with WHO and other partners.



A woman receiving her medication at DOTS center

But none of these efforts would be possible without the thousands of individuals who diagnose and deliver life-saving drugs, free of cost, in every corner of the nation. Many of these individuals are community volunteers whose dedication not only saves the lives of the individuals they treat, but also additional lives by curbing further transmission to the rest of the community.

It is the effective involvement and hard work of these individuals and other

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

partners (private providers, NGO's, corporations, medical colleges, etc.) that will provide the momentum to finally eradicate TB. To this end, USAID/India is supporting the Secretariat of the new National TB Partnership for Care and Control - the first partnership of its kind to bring stakeholders together from all sectors in an effort to provide strategic vision and promote a coordinated response for TB control in India.



Women at an TB awareness raising session

Underscoring USAID's commitment to TB control in India, Elizabeth Hogan, USAID/India Mission Director/A said: *"Even though a cure has existed for more than half a century, tuberculosis remains one of humankind's greatest scourges. TB anywhere is TB everywhere. Until we, as partners, have effectively brought TB under control in India we are all at risk. We must work together to strengthen TB care and control, and USAID is fully committed to doing our part in this effort."*



TB health workers on their way to a home visit



A man examines his TB medications



Patients are routinely weighed to monitor their progress in fighting the disease.



A housewife who works as a community DOTS provider